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JEFFERSON AND THE NEWSPAPER.

By WORTHINGTON CHAUNCEY FORD.

(Read before the Society, December 12, 1904.)

Three men stand out in the Revolution distinguished for their silence—Washington, Franklin and Jefferson. No long address or speech is recorded of any of them, and yet their influence was potent at a time when only great abilities counted. Washington never wrote for a newspaper, unless some “advertisements” concerning lands could be accounted as contributions. Franklin was essentially a newspaper man, and as a newspaper man he stood among the first in colonial times.

The newspaper was primarily something else than a newspaper, and for this Franklin was largely responsible. As head of the colonial post office he had the appointment of postmasters, and he soon saw that the profits of the post office would be helpful in supporting the local newspaper. He would supply the types and press, and the printer of the gazettes; and it is remarkable in how many presses in different colonies he had an interest, drawing a profit from such as held post office attachments or the often lucrative appointments as printers to the Honorable the Governor and Legislature. Partisan papers of course existed; but it would be difficult to name papers in existence before the Revolution like the *Aurora*—established as it were for the campaign only—to sink into oblivion after the object of the campaign had been attained. With the Washington Administration we find a cohort of such papers, edited as a rule by aliens, whose records before they refugeeed to America were fortunately thinly veiled in

ignorance, with just enough known to add a piquant flavor to their personalities. To pose as martyrs of the persecution of a foreign government was an almost certain passport to the editorial office.

The value of political propaganda was an essential part of Jefferson's beliefs; but he preferred to work secretly and privately, not in open as did Hamilton and Adams. Take his letter to Norborne Nicholas (April 7, 1800), in the politically important year of 1800, when the contest for the Presidency was at its height, untempered by campaign assessments, campaign funds, and highly organized political machines. Jefferson sends eight dozen copies of a pamphlet by Cooper, containing some political principles, "with a view that one should be sent to every county committee in the State, either from yourself personally or from your central committee." But it must not be known the pamphlets came from Jefferson, for "you will readily see what a handle would be made of my advocating their contents." The situation in North Carolina—a doubtful State in modern phrase—troubled him:

"The lawyers all tories, the people substantially republican, but uninformed and deceived by the lawyers, who are elected of necessity because of few other candidates. The medicine for that State must be very mild and secretly administered. But nothing should be spared to give them true information."

How simple it all was in way of contrast! To-day the state would be flooded with campaign literature, invaded by spell-binders, aroused by mass-meetings, torn by debates, and in the turmoil would come the election, in which would be expressed the will of the sovereign people—a euphemism that enables us to forget much that should be remembered.

Jefferson was an idealist, whose ideals easily became realities. His intensity, even narrowness, of feel-

ing accounted for this. He was so constituted that he could not admit of a half-hearted following. A man was either for him or against him; a federalist or a republican. Every letter he wrote had for its object the advancement of his political principles; to his mind enlightenment meant the spread of republicanism; in his view a newspaper should be republican and intensely partisan.

The people were in his view universally republican, but certain leaders were monarchists, and therefore wofully wrong in opinions. The experience of a weak government had induced the adoption of the constitution; but once adopted, that instrument became subject to criticism and the eagerness of the anti-republicans to strengthen all the features of the government which gave it resemblance to an English constitution, produced a reaction, and the republicans came into power. The struggle produced a division of opinion and the newspapers reflected this division. In the naïve account of this separation which Jefferson gave to Ebeling, a foreigner, he placed in the federalist or anti-republican party the old refugees and tories, British merchants residing in the United States and composing the main body of our merchants, speculators and holders in the banks and public funds, officers of the federal government, with some exceptions, and office hunters, willing to give up principles for places, a "numerous and noisy tribe," and finally "nervous persons, whose languid fibers have more analogy with a passive than active state of things." In the Republican party he placed the entire body of landholders throughout the union, and the body of laborers, not being landholders, whether in husbanding or the arts. The description is not unlike that which an extreme partisan of to-day would give of party divisions. It may be said in pass-

ing that the federalists of Jefferson's account are the republicans of the present time, and Jefferson's republicans are now claimed by the democratic leaders.

With this division of parties, continued Jefferson, writing from his retirement in 1796, there were newspapers adapted to the anti-republican palate and others to the republican. Of the former class were the *Columbian Centinel*, the Hartford newspaper, Noah Webster's *Minerva*, Feno's *Gazette of the United States*, Davies's Richmond paper, etc. The leading republican papers were Adams's Boston paper, Greenleaf's of New York, Freneau's of New Jersey, Bache's of Philadelphia, Pleasants' of Virginia. While the publishers of the newspapers were Americans, the principal writers were of foreign origin, and represented a not very high type of adventurer. A plentiful supply of billingsgate, intense partisanship, a trace or suspicion of intelligence, and a bigoted assurance that the opposing party was entirely in the wrong represented the full outfit of these so-called journalists. Webster and Cobbett lived long enough to exhaust their partisanship and turn to instruction in the use of the English language. Bache died in the year of the plague.

It cannot be said that the ideals of journalism were high, and the intensity of party struggle made the lowest instruments acceptable. Personalities were freely exchanged, and the character of no man was safe from the assaults of anonymous scribblers, who as easily changed their allegiance as their coat, and who gained a precarious living from personalities, half truths and untruths, expressed in the most outrageous terms. Neither the journalist, nor his half brother the pamphleteer, was choice in his object or manner of attack. One of the ablest, William Cobbett, wrote in the *Political Censor* for September, 1796, "that lump of walk-

ing tallow, streaked with lamp-black, that calls itself Samuel F. Bradford, has the impudence to say that my wardrobe consisted of my old regimentals”—one gentleman speaking of another!

John Adams admitted the influence of these men in overthrowing the federalists—Freneau, Duane, Callender, Cooper and Lyon, with “their great patron and protector, *i. e.*, Jefferson.” “A group of foreign liars, encouraged by a few ambitious native gentlemen, have discomfited the education, the talents, the virtues, and the property of the country.”

Let us glance at the relations held by Jefferson to some of these scribblers.

In such a warfare it would be supposed that Jefferson was at a disadvantage. Perhaps we might say that the social conditions in Virginia were less fitted to bring out the controversial powers of the people. The Revolution and the very laws against property and church rights which Jefferson was so instrumental in framing, exhausted the subjects of controversy. The national constitution was accepted with amendments, but after that struggle parties in Virginia grew with the development of the definition of Jeffersonian principles. Never a ready speaker, Jefferson enjoyed the reputation of a ready pen; but we need not dip deep into his papers to appreciate the extent to which his influence rested upon his correspondence. Before his return from France he rarely undertook directly to draft measures of relief or of legislation; but he would write to some friend suggesting the matter, and to other correspondents mentioning the subject and pointing to a proper mode of action. Thus he prepared the ground for his position, leaving the brunt of the fight to his followers. In cabinet he was no match for Hamilton, and he was restive under the consciousness of his

inferiority. Fixed as he was in opinion, he could not defend it from attack, or readily reply to questions and criticisms. The conditions in New England and the Middle States gave quite another result. The town meetings trained ready debaters and often fine orators. The questions at issue in Massachusetts and New York kept alive a spirit of controversy. We would find small pickings of controversy in the Virginia gazettes, while those of New York, Philadelphia and Boston teemed with battles royal. We cannot picture Jefferson leading a contest in assembly, Congress or convention, any more than we can imagine Washington doing the same. But we could name fifty great debaters in that day who were in their element when the great debate was on, and they were striving to secure every point of vantage against one another, giving and taking wordy blows with the skill that only long practice could develop.

Hamilton realized the advantages of newspaper attack, and to his many controversies he brought a vigor and a fulness that left his adversaries gasping for breath. He was the colossus of the federal party, and to the weak attacks of his opponents he gave swinging answers and remained unanswered himself. Read the Federalist, Camillus, how he poured out his flood of facts, arguments and suppositions; anticipating criticism by stating all points of view, reënforcing his positions by recurring again and again to the main arguments. No wonder Jefferson was amazed, dazzled and perplexed, for he was incompetent to meet the champion. "For God's sake take up your pen," wrote Jefferson to Madison, "and give a fundamental reply to Curtius and Camillus."

Jefferson was a sensitive man, shrinking from attack and even from criticism. Face to face with an oppo-

nent he was helpless; but at his desk, pen in hand, and writing to a trusted confidant he was in his full power. What if he showed astonishing judgment in the selection of his confidants? We sometimes feel as if we were in the presence of a child, so naïve and simple are his acts. He claimed to have been entirely taken in by Hamilton in the deal between the assumption of the debt and the location of the federal city. He was astonished that his offering to Thomas Paine a passage from France in a public vessel was interpreted as an attack upon the clergy, an affront to religion. He was grieved when a hireling of the press published his private letters proving a serious defect in his memory.

"I have been for some time used as the property of the newspapers, a fair mark for every man's dirt. Some too, have indulged themselves in this exercise who would not have done it, had they known me otherwise than through these impure and injurious channels. It is hard treatment, and for a singular kind of offence, that of having obtained by the labors of a life the indulgent opinions of a part of one's fellow citizens. However, these moral evils must be submitted to, like the physical scourges of tempest, fire, etc."

This want of ability to debate, this lack of courage to father a measure, and this quality of simplicity in selecting his agents united to turn him to the press, the only instrument for disseminating his opinions. Yet here he never acted himself and over his own name. I know no important essay or communication in a newspaper which can be laid to his pen. He instructed, even hired, others; and he could prepare with great ability a bill, a report, a state paper or a pamphlet. But in controversial writing he was weak.

Freneau was employed on the *New York Daily Advertiser* as editor or superintendent, the publishers being Childs and Swaine. He promised to print in that

journal Priestley's reply to Edmund Burke, as soon as received, thus indicating his political leanings. General Henry Lee (Light-Horse Harry) suggested to Madison that it might be expedient to give Freneau some public appointment, and Madison knowing the talents of the man and his merit and suffering during the Revolution, passed the recommendation on to Jefferson. This was in 1791, when the republicans had no satisfactory organ in Philadelphia.

Jefferson and others sought to induce him to come to Philadelphia, to establish a weekly or half-weekly paper, without advertisements, so that it might go through the states and furnish a whig vehicle of intelligence. In November, 1791, he did establish the *National Gazette*, which lived for about two years, and then died for want of money. He was "translator" in the Department of State when he set up as a publisher and Jefferson turned over to him the *Leyden Gazette*, that he might translate and publish the essential parts. With this Jefferson claimed that his connection with Freneau began and ended.

"But as to any other direction or indication of my wish how his press should be conducted, what sort of intelligence he should give, what essays encourage, I can protest in the presence of heaven, that I never did by myself or any other, directly or indirectly, say a syllable, nor attempt any kind of influence."

Yet almost in the same paragraph he admits that he probably did say to others that Freneau's columns should be open to pieces written against the aristocratical and monarchical principles of Publicola [J. Q. A.] and of Davila [J. A.]. It was small excuse to hold up Freneau as a man of genius, and plead a general love of science and great talents in explanation of his supporting his paper, and touting for subscribers. And it is

on a high plane that the Secretary of State defines his views on the press.

"No government ought to be without censors: and where the press is free, no one ever will. If virtuous, it need not fear the fair operation of attack and defence. Nature has given to man no other means of sifting out the truth either in religion, law or politics. I think it as honorable to the government neither to know, nor notice, its sycophants or censors, as it would be undignified and criminal to pamper the former and persecute the latter."

We admit the force of the argument, but cannot see how it sugars the Freneau pill, a nauseous dose. Hamilton pointed out the weakness of Jefferson's position.

Is the salary paid to Freneau, he asked, given for translations or for publications the design of which is to vilify those to whom the voice of the people has committed the administration of public affairs—to oppose the measures of government, and, by false insinuations, to disturb the public peace?

"In common life it is thought ungrateful for a man to bite the hand that puts bread in his mouth; but if the man is hired to do it, the case is altered."

The press became more virulent as the cleavage of political beliefs progressed.

Washington in 1792 had protested against the abuse of government and the officers of it in the newspapers; and this too without the editor's condescending to investigate the motives or the facts. Should it continue, he asserted, "it will be impossible for any man living to manage the helm or to keep the machine together." Matters grew worse as time went on, and personal differences in political sentiments were made to take the garb of general dissensions. It was not enough to seek to impede public measures, the confidence of the public

in their servants was affected. It was an unusual outburst on Washington's part when he wrote (in 1793):

"The publications in Freneau's and Bache's papers are outrages on common decency."

We recall the record in the *Anas* of Jefferson of Washington's loss of temper over the abuse which was directed against him.

"The President was much inflamed, got into one of those passions when he cannot command himself, ran on much on the personal abuse which had been bestowed upon him, defied any man on earth to produce one single act of his since he had been in the government which was not done on the purest motives, that he had never repented but once the having slipped the moment of resigning his office, and that was every moment since, that by God he had rather be in his grave than in his present situation. That he had rather be on his farm than to be made emperor of the world, and yet that they were charging him with wanting to be a king. That that rascal Freneau sent him three of his papers every day, as if he thought he would become the distributor of his papers, that he could see in this nothing but an impudent design to insult him. He ended in this high tone."

Jefferson had noticed that Washington's health was being undermined by these attacks

"feeling those things more than any person I ever met with. I am sincerely sorry to see them."

Yet this very Freneau, this inconsiderate and irresponsible scribbler was at this time the protégé of Jefferson, holding an office under him in the Department of State. And when Washington mentioned to him the stream of abuse that came from Freneau's pen, Jefferson recorded in his diary:

"He (W.) was very sore and warm, and I took his intention to be that I should interpose in some way with Freneau, per-

haps withdraw his appointment of translating clerk to my office. But I will not do it. His paper has saved our constitution which was galloping fast into monarchy, and has been checked by no one means so powerfully as by that paper. It is well and universally known that it has been that paper which has checked the career of the Monocrats, and the President, not sensible of the designs of the party, has not with his usual good sense, and sang froid, looked on the efforts of this free press, and seen that tho' some bad things had passed thro' it to the public, yet the good have predominated universally."

One of the motives that led Washington to draft his farewell address was a disinclination to be longer buffeted in the public prints by a set of infamous scribblers and Bache's and other papers of like complexion continued their attacks, as indecent as they were void of truth and fairness, culminating in the famous editorial penned by Bache and published on the very day of Washington's laying down of office.

Washington retired to private life in 1797, and was succeeded in office by a man of as pure motives, but one possessing a quite extraordinary capacity for inviting antagonisms. His own party, his very Cabinet were against him, and the opposition press fed fat on the public policy and measures of his administration. Their criticism under Washington was mild to what it became under Adams, and the dominating respect for the general soon gave place to a virulence that in personalities and generally low tone of opposition has rarely been equalled. The sedition law of 1799 was passed to curb the evil.

"An ineffectual attempt to extinguish the fire of defamation," writes John Quincy Adams in 1836, "but it operated like oil upon the flames." Jefferson saw in it the suppression of the whig papers—that is those

which were on his side. The printing presses were to be under the imprimatur of the executive, but Bache's *Aurora* was immediately aimed at for its action. Nor would much have been required to overturn the *Aurora*.

"That paper and also Cary's totter for want of subscriptions. We should really exert ourselves to procure them, for if these papers fall, republicanism will be entirely browbeaten."

The complementary measures—an alien and a citizen bill—were directed against Frenchmen, and the political writer Volney, whose *Ruins* are better known by repute than by reading, was believed to be the intended victim. The country being on the verge of war with France, the French were regarded as enemies of the country. Volney and Dupont left the United States, and Callender, of whom we shall hear more, became a citizen. This was before the measure became a law, but it gave terrible forebodings to Jefferson.

"If this goes down," he wrote on what must have been a very blue day, "we shall immediately see attempted another act of Congress, declaring that the President shall continue in office during life, reserving to another occasion the transfer of the succession to his heirs, and the establishment of the Senate for life."

In his draft of the Kentucky resolutions he declared the sedition law to be "altogether void and of no effect." He fostered an agitation against these laws, and eagerly seized upon the advantage they offered to spread the doctrines of republicanism.

"Our citizens may be deceived for a while and have been deceived; but as long as the presses can be protected, we may trust to them for light."

James Thomson Callender was a Scotchman by birth, and was obliged to leave that country to avoid a prosecution for a political pamphlet. Coming to America he found employment in reporting the proceedings of Congress for the *Philadelphia Gazette*, but he made enemies, or thought he did, and when in 1796 official reporters were appointed, he became a teacher and drifting to Baltimore was stranded. He wrote some additions to Guthrie's Geography for two dollars a page—a remuneration not low for the day, and under the encouragement of Leiper and Alexander J. Dallas, undertook a history of 1796—a partisan book describing a year of intense partisan activity. To this book Jefferson gave some pecuniary aid, although Callender printed the famous attack upon Hamilton, who in defense proved his honesty at the expense of his private morality. Callender in writing to Jefferson gloated over this incident.

"If you have not seen it, no anticipation can equal the infamy of this piece [*i. e.*, H's defence]. It is worth all that fifty of the best pens in America could have said against him."

Jefferson sent him money, and Madison not only subscribed to his libels but supplied material for his productions.

The book itself, "The American Annual Register," is a sorry piece of work, never rising above mediocrity and out of touch with the relations of the events he undertakes to describe. It was well described by the *Gazette of the United States* as the veriest catch-penny that ever was published, the mere tittle-tattle of Jacobinism. Even Jefferson expressed disappointment, for he had gained an opinion favorable to the writer's ability. But Callender clearly indicates his sponsors, praising Jefferson, Monroe and Paine, while denouncing in unsparing terms Mr. Guelph (a clumsy fling at

George III.), Mr. Washington, the six per centers (Hamilton and his followers), and all their acts—excise, Jay's treaty, etc. From 1797 to 1800 Jefferson countenanced him by gifts of money, but in 1798 the touchstone of the sedition law proved the fineness of Callendar's metal. He retired for a time to Raspberry Plain, as for him there was no more safety in Philadelphia than in Constantinople. Further he was "entirely sick even of Republicans," whose encouragement was confined to words, and he complained of the "gross stile of writing" in the country, a complaint based upon the attacks made upon himself. In truth the language and animus were not so low as his own. Philadelphia was a sink of destruction, a porch of perdition, and the yellow fever was a just visitation upon the journalism of that city. He had quarreled with Bache, and the more respectable among the Democrats had seen the unwisdom of giving him any real encouragement to write.

Some time in 1799, and apparently at the instance of Jefferson, he went to Richmond, where he believed he would be more free from a process of sedition. The *Examiner* offered him an opening at ten dollars a week, and he corresponded freely with Jefferson. His plans were many, his means were very limited, and possessed with the idea that he was the victim of a conspiracy, he wrote as he felt. It was now that he compiled his most scurrilous volume, "The Prospect Before Us," and submitted it almost page by page to Jefferson. The Virginians were so fluent in their promises of support that the suspicions of Callendar were aroused. He expressed a wish for fifty acres of clear land, and a hearty Virginian female, that knows how to fatten pigs and boil hominy, and hold her tongue—which ob-

tained, "adieu to the rascally society of mankind for whom I feel an indifference which increases per diem."

Jefferson the candidate was more cautious than Jefferson the creator of a party. He wrote more seldom and he would not sign his letters, although this meant no concealment, for his writing is the most characteristic among the men of that day. The seeds he had so industriously planted and tended were sprouting. Lyon established his scourge of aristocracy, and the sedition law bagged Lyon, Cooper, Haswell and Callender. Monroe, as Governor of Virginia, wanted to employ counsel to defend Callender, to vindicate the principles of the State. It would have been as useless as impolitic to have interfered. Callender was tried, found guilty, fined and imprisoned. His letters, written from Richmond jail, for eight months reached Jefferson, and he continued his writing of the "Prospect." He came from the jail soured in mind, "equally calumniated, pillaged and betrayed by all parties."

Jefferson the candidate had now become Jefferson the President. He was now in a position to reverse the policy of his predecessor, and the prosecutions under the sedition law were among the first objects of his care. The delay of even two months drove Callender into recriminations, and as Jefferson would not appoint him postmaster at Richmond he became hostile. The President knew he was unfit for the place, and further knew that Callender only wanted it to be in a position to make a favorable marriage. In a year's time Callender turned his attacks upon Jefferson, assailing his private as well as his public character, and exposing to an unsympathetic world the letters and encouragement he had received from him. Jefferson was pained, and sought to explain. His gifts of money were charities, his aids were given to a man of genius suffering under

persecution, not to a writer on our politics. He had long wished he would cease to write on them as doing more harm than good. Callender's base ingratitude presented human nature in a hideous form. No protestations availed, and the flaying process continued until Callender was drowned after a drunken spree. But his foul abuse had been copied into every federalist newspaper in the land, and this full-length portrait of the leader of democracy was long an object of laughter and of scorn among these who could not overcome their political prejudices.

When a public body wages war against a newspaper or a pamphleteer it presents a very undignified appearance, besides being unequal to the contest. We smile at the efforts of Parliament to suppress criticism by imprisonment in the tower and by trials the meaning of which is more mediæval than modern. A very neat story could be told of our American legislature in its vain attempts to obtain redress for a little ink spilled in penning a probably well-deserved criticism or rebuke. In defence of its dignity it has thrown to the wind all dignity, and in using its ponderous privilege against a gnat or a flea it has performed antics which are as futile as laughable. Duane had fallen under the displeasure of the Senate by printing with comments a bill for counting the presidential vote. The bill had been prepared by the federalists and was open to the criticism that under it partisan advantage might be gained; but for saying this the Senate decided that Duane had offended its privileges and that the comments were "false, defamatory, scandalous and malicious." Duane merely avoided the service of a warrant of arrest until the close of the session, and then publicly appeared as a persecuted patriot, a martyr to the liberty of the press, being toasted at democratic feasts and on the Fourth

of July. It was thought strange at the time that he was not prosecuted under the sedition law, and it was not long before so prominent an offender fell under the provisions of that act.

Upon his accession to the presidential chair Jefferson gave direction to have the suit against Duane discontinued, so far as it was brought under the provision of the sedition act, and ordered a new suit under whatever other law might apply to the case. The grand jury refused to find a true bill, and so nothing came of it. But Jefferson gravely asserted that deeming the sedition law contrary to the constitution, it was consequently void. In a message to the Senate, which never left the Executive Mansion, he further said:

“In this procedure I have endeavored to do the duty of my station between the Senate and citizen, to pursue for the former that legal vindication which was the object of their resolution; to cover the latter with whatsoever of protection the Constitution had granted him and to secure to the press that degree of freedom in which it remained under the authority of the states, with whom alone the power is left of abridging that freedom, the general Government being expressly excluded from it.”

The peculiarity of this position was distinctly Jeffersonian. He assumed that the President was to execute the laws. Further, if he sees a prosecution put into a train which was not lawful, he might order it to be discontinued and put into legal train. He affirmed that the sedition act was no law, because in opposition to the constitution, and expressed his determination to treat it as a nullity wherever it came into the way of his functions. Having constructed this stronghold, he complacently wrote, “There appears to be no weak part in any of these positions or inferences.” We may ask if the President may set aside a law which was properly

passed by both houses of Congress and received the approval of the President, what becomes of the functions of the Supreme Court, of Congress itself? It is surprising, wrote Justice Story, with what facility men glide into the opinion that a measure is universally deemed unconstitutional because it is so in their own opinion, especially if it has become unpopular. The question of the constitutionality of the sedition act was never brought before the Supreme Court, and the fact that the law was very impolitic must not blind us to the fact that it received weighty support in legislatures and in courts of law. Jefferson's interpretation of the law was only a repetition of the Kentucky resolution of 1798:

"From these different constructions of the same act by different branches [of government], less mischief arises than from giving to any one of them a control over the others" (to Hay, June, 1807.)

This position towards the sedition act led him into trouble with Callender. If the act was to be treated as null and void in Duane's case, it could not be enforced in Callender's. Not only was Callender to be set free, but the fine imposed upon him was to be restored. Not refunded, for that would mean an act of Congress; but by private subscription towards which Jefferson contributed fifty dollars. It was Jefferson and his friends who also contributed to pay the fines of Holt, Baldwin, Brown, Lyon—also staggering under the sedition law.

As to the principles of civil service reform, or the proper rules of appointment to office, there can be little doubt among right-minded persons at this late day. A sad experience of the spoils system has left its memories and many remains; but a return to its abuses would be looked upon as a reversion to barbarism. When Jefferson took office the places were filled almost entirely

by federalists and great pressure was brought to bear upon him to oust the incumbents and appoint good republicans. The tempters assumed many shapes, from the bosom friend down to the dishonest office-holder seeking advancement; and the journalist was not wanting. James Cheetham had done little to attract attention beyond a few partisan pamphlets, a somewhat notorious intimacy with Aaron Burr, and a recently acquired connection with a paper in New York, called the *American Citizen*. His partner, Denniston, was less known than himself, but in the spring of 1801, the two glowed with the favor of party zeal.

"There are no citizens," they wrote to Jefferson in June, "who more highly value your talents, your virtues and the republican services which you have rendered your Country, than ourselves—there are none who are more willing at the present moment to bestow confidence and first applause—none whose affections more anxiously include the idea of a successful issue to the administration which the people and the Constitution have committed to your charge."

Hence, they argued, that the people of the city and State of New York looked with confidence to the new administration for a "thorough change in the different offices, so as to exclude the obnoxious characters, those who were inimical to the revolution, or have since become hostile to the Constitution and to the principles and progress of republican government." Such a course was, in their opinion, absolutely necessary to preserve that republican majority in the State which had elevated Jefferson to the Presidency and diffused universal joy among the friends of liberty in every part of the Union. And changes of a similar nature would be "extremely useful" in the eastern states, whatever might be the situation of the southern part of the

country in this respect. Republican exertions would certainly be relaxed if unhappily the people were convinced that all their efforts to change the chief magistrate had produced no consequent effect in renovating the subordinate stations of the government—changes equally necessary to the preservation of that public spirit which had caused the country once more to return to republican measures and republican men.

Was ever plea more seductive! For themselves they asked no office, and they pleaded party service and loyalty past and to come. But they began to indicate this and that man for removal. One was a federalist, with no other charge to answer for; another was a British sympathizer; another had held an office under the British king during the Revolution; offensive partisanship was laid against another; with a little encouragement no federalist would have escaped some charges. But Jefferson was not able to meet their wishes as to a clean sweep, however inclined he undoubtedly was to reward his followers, and Cheetham soon had troubles of his own. While supporting Jefferson and his measures he became involved in that deepest of mires, New York politics, and this situation made him of less value to the administration. Whatever we may think of Aaron Burr, no one will deny that he was a consummate and an unfortunate political manager; and at this time, Vice President, party leader in New York, and of unlimited ambition, he held a position which promised much—if only he could get rid of certain obstacles, Hamilton, for example, or more especially Jefferson. He considered some alliance with the Federalists to attain his object, and De Witt Clinton was his agent. He it was who sought to suppress the publication of that utterly worthless history of the administration of John Adams, written by the hack

writer John Wood. A "newspaper hack," writes Henry Adams, "not quite so successful as Cheetham and Duane, or so vile as Callender." In these manœuvres Burr broke with Cheetham, who took his revenge, and in so doing exposed his own tortuous course in such a way as to make Jefferson shy of much closer connection with so agile a turn-coat. Nevertheless some connection there was, and the President found him a useful instrument at times, giving him scraps of intelligence or encouragement, obtaining pamphlets through him and buying of him the New York *Evening Post*, one of the ablest critics of the administration. "It is proper I should know what our opponents say and do," wrote Jefferson; "yet really make a matter of conscience of not contributing to the support of their papers." So he paid Cheetham for his exchange copy, thus salving his conscience by making the contribution go to the support of Cheetham instead of Coleman. In 1804 Cheetham began to be financially embarrassed and begged Jefferson to make the collector of the port give him the printing of his office, as had been promised; or in case of continued refusal, to remove him from office. With this incident Cheetham may be dismissed from our notice.

William Duane was one of the ablest, if not the ablest of these scribbling immigrants, and his connection with Jefferson lasted for a quarter of a century. He came to this country from India, found a position under Bache on the *Aurora*, and succeeded to its management on the death of the grandson of Franklin. He was a loyal follower of Jefferson, and turned to him in 1801 as the light and leader of a political revolution. Unfortunately his support was not so disinterested as his protestations would lead us to believe.

Three days before Jefferson took office Duane wrote

in favor of a man who had been discharged from office because of "his discovering the removal of papers from the Department of State by means of a false key"—certainly a remarkable reason for dismissal unless the false key had been found upon the clerk, or traced to him in some way. A few months later (in May), he again wrote in favor of another clerk who had in the former administration lost his place in the Treasury, for his political opinions. This was the ostensible cause of writing. The real one was to announce that he had found it necessary to enter into the stationery and bookselling business. The hostility of the custom house and the abuse in the post office had made all idea of obtaining a profit from the newspaper hopeless. The collector, he claimed, sought to prevent merchants and auctioneers from advertising in the paper, and a combination against him had been formed.

He asked for the department contracts for stationery and for supplying the "public library, ordered by the late Congress, with books. My acquaintance with men of letters in England and the most eminent booksellers, would enable me to procure them with more advantage than any other person not similarly circumstanced could." The trial under the sedition law was still hanging over him—and he asked Jefferson for aid, believing that he alone was suffering from malicious persecution after years of contest and sacrifice.

"I had determined before the election that upon the success of the people's choice, I should dispose of the paper and pursue another profession; but I find the hatred so violent against me that it would follow me forever, and in any other situation I should not possess such formidable means of defence."

But the paper did not afford a surplus, and when he asked for aid his friends rebuffed him.

"The world think me making a fortune, because I am always cheerful! My friends think it unnecessary to be very particular in their favors in the way of business, because they say industry and talents like mine will always meet reward! The best paper in the United States must of course be the most profitable! But they never consider that there is more money spent in making it a good paper, and more labour than on any two papers in the Union! and that this must be the case, or it must become as vapid and dull as those that are more profitable and printed cheaper."

So he opened a book and stationery store, stocking it on credit, and in full expectation of obtaining the patronage of the government departments. Jefferson gave him encouragement.

"As to your proposition on the subject of stationery I believe you may be assured of the favor of every department here. . . . My custom is inconsiderable, and will only show my desire to be useful to you."

Fatal concession! From that hour the dependence increased. Even Gallatin, than whom it would be difficult to find a purer man, promised Duane encouragement, and thought the Congressional printing should be divided and Duane given his share. Samuel Harrison Smith then held the printing of the laws and of every department, so the Congress orders and the department stationery could have gone in whole or in part to Duane. Jefferson held out to the latter a kind word and some orders for books.

Jefferson gave him letters of recommendation to Johnson in London and Pougers in Paris with orders for books. In return Duane sought to do something for Jefferson, and when Callender opened the sluice gates of his abuse, Duane wrote of his wishing to repel the "monstrous calumnies of a wretch that deserves not to be named," but seeing that the attack reacted

upon the calumniator he abandoned the task. Still he asks Jefferson for facts "which may be used to throw the villainous aspersions into a still more odious light." Light was not wanted; the deepest obscurity alone was needed.

In November, 1802, Thomas Paine, basking in the favor of the President, began his letters to the public. An amusing story could be told of how Paine caused the greatest uneasiness to Monroe, in Paris, after his narrow escape from the guillotine of Robespierre; he was now to be no less a thorn in the side of his friends. Even Duane, who was by no means particular or timid in his language, saw the danger. He warned Paine that the Americans would not stand too much of the Age of Reason; and should he persist in that line he would "be deserted by the only party that respects or does not hate him; that all his political writings will be rendered useless; and even his fame destroyed." Paine laughed at the warning, and related how Dr. Rush, when he began to write *Common Sense* had warned him to avoid two words—Independence and Republicanism. The fate of Paine is well known.

There is a long gap in the correspondence between Duane and Jefferson, nothing being found between the end of 1802 and the beginning of 1806. The events of that period must have interested the journalist, as they were devoted to strengthening the party, conciliating faction, and preparing for the election of 1804. The fruits of Jefferson's internal and external policy were coming into view, and while failure could not yet be predicated, yet a word of like import could have been applied. Even Jefferson could not have been more sensitive to changes in the policy of the republican party than was Duane, and he takes up his pen to warn the President of certain disquieting rumors which

may have escaped the notice of one in so exalted a position as to be "more frequently deceived and flattered than correctly and candidly informed." Rumor said that Jefferson had thrown himself into the arms of a New England party, and given it his exclusive confidence; that he treated with coldness and reserve the sturdy and independent republicans of the south. The evidence put forward was John Randolph and James Monroe. It was also stated that only one member of his cabinet (the ever faithful Madison) was in agreement with his policy; that the other members were engaged in machinations by which the executive measures were frustrated and public confidence palsied. That there was a "kitchen" cabinet, like that of St. James; and that Jefferson had decided to discountenance the most ardent republicans, calling them Jacobins; and had announced his determination of appointing to office only moderate men—third party men or *quids*. It was asserted that the Miranda expedition had received something more than encouragement from the national executive. Duane was useful in giving hints and information, more or less definite. He not only gave interesting political gossip, but he wrote on other matters also: of the quarrel between the Spanish Minister, Yrujo, and his secretary, Magdalena; of the troubles in Kentucky, and Burr's conspiracy; of a proposed attack upon Jefferson, to be printed in Philadelphia, the proof sheets of which went to New Jersey, and "he suspected" farther, and of Truxton's sense of injury.

These threatenings in the west turned Duane's thoughts to the militia, he being the colonel of the "best regiment in the state." In July, 1807, he "tendered his services in any situation which my humble talents may appear to you useful in the present crisis of affairs, when zeal, fidelity and intelligence may perhaps

be required." He wished a telegraph system to be established along the coasts, a system we remember in the Count of Monte Cristo. He planned a campaign involving the taking of Canada, Halifax, Newfoundland and Jamaica.

"I cannot be mistaken I think in the momentous influence which the boldness of the idea of attacking Jamaica would produce on the Royal Exchange and in the cabinet of George III. I believe the very menace would be better than a battle of Trafalgar and as decisive in its degree as the battles of Austerlitz or Jena."

He was in debt, worried by law suits, weary of the *Aurora* and of politics. But the glamor of war attracted him. He began the publication of a military library, a compilation of his own—to be published not for profit but for public utility. Translations from the French, reprints of English works, with perspicuous diagrams of all the modern improvements were to form the basis of the library. General Dearborn, not yet having won the laurels he did in the War of 1812, and Wilkinson, up to his eyes in intrigue with his Spanish neighbors and masters, were endorsers of the undertaking. A manual for American militia, he believed, might be countenanced by Congress. In 1809, when the pressure of Jefferson's embargo measures was seriously felt, Duane was still in trouble.

"It cannot be supposed," he wrote, "that six newspapers in this city, four in New York, four in Boston, three in Baltimore, two in Norfolk, and two in Charleston could be supported as efficiently as they are without secret supplies. [i. e., British gold.] I find it impossible to get out of debt with the paper of greatest circulation in the country; and my personal expenses beside clothing and food would be discharged with fifty dollars a year."

At last Jefferson moved in his favor, and in the last months of his administration and as a recess appointment he gave him a commission of lieutenant colonel of riflemen. The Senate in January, 1809, confirmed it, but the appointment threatened to be a source of trouble and above all expense, for the numerous law suits against him made it necessary for him to be within call of the courts. Were he ordered to some distant point, his commission would prove his ruin. Jefferson was about to leave office, and at least Duane could speak freely. Madison and some of his associates had looked upon Duane with disfavor, and could easily do him a great disservice in the apparently impartial performance of duty. So he asks Jefferson to so influence Madison that Duane need not be sent away, unless an actual war is at hand.

"I consulted with General Dearborn," was Jefferson's reply, "and we concluded that the public service permitted the indulgence and the proceeding which would accommodate your own private affairs. . . . I have also taken the necessary measures here [Washington] with the proper persons, for the same purpose, and I expect you will be accommodated."

And after eight years of office the now retired President wrote:

"I cannot conclude without thanking you for the information you have usefully conveyed to me from time to time, and for the many proofs of your friendship and confidence. I carry into retirement deep-seated feelings for these favors and shall always recollect them with pleasure."

The rest of Duane's story is soon told. He resigned from the army, crowded out, he asserted, through intrigue, but his own misconduct had more to do with it than any outside movement. He succeeded, however,

in selling to the government a compilation on military discipline, in the purchase of which the government is believed to have been cruelly buncoed. Duane became a chronic applicant for office, and in the disappointments encountered, he turned savagely against his friends, quarreled with Madison, Monroe and Gallatin, and lost his influence in the domestic politics of Pennsylvania. "Dangerous as a foe, he would be fatal as a friend" was the opinion of Adams. His poverty drove him into excesses, and his demands for recognition came dangerously near the point of blackmail. With Jefferson he maintained a correspondence until 1826, printing some translations from the French and giving him bits of political intelligence, in which the personal was prominent. Able as he was, his prejudices were too strong, his methods too drastic, and his disposition too variable to enable him to hold the influence that was his due. In a period of storm and stress—like that which Jefferson termed "our reign of terror"—meaning the second administration of Washington and the years of John Adams—Duane had his uses; but in the subsequent period he was too limited by natural gifts readily to adapt himself to changing circumstances, and as the administration drifted from pure republicanism Duane could not follow, and did not remain where he belonged—by the side of John Randolph of Roanoke.

Only a year passed after the Callender incident and Jefferson himself was writhing under the lash of unbridled criticism.

"To punish however is impracticable until the body of the people, from whom juries are to be taken, get their minds to rights; and even then I doubt its expediency. While a full range is proper for actions by individuals, either private or public, for slanders affecting them, I would wish much to

see the experiment tried of getting along without public prosecutions for libels. I believe we can do it. Patience and well doing, instead of punishment, if it can be found sufficiently efficacious, would be a happy change in the instrument of government."

What is this but a domestic application of Jefferson's foreign policy of "peaceable coercion"?

His good intentions did not last long, for he came to believe that he was in duty bound to restore credibility to the press. The federalists, he related, having failed to gag the press by the sedition law, now sought to injure it by pushing its licentiousness and lying to such a degree of prostitution as to deprive it of all credit. The least informed people had learned that nothing in a newspaper was to be believed.

"This is a dangerous state of things, and the press ought to be restored to its credibility if possible. The restraints provided by the laws of the states are sufficient for this if applied. And I have therefore long thought that a few prosecutions of the most prominent offenders would have a wholesome effect in restoring the integrity of the presses. Not a general prosecution, for that would look like persecution; but a selected one." And he enclosed an example for Pennsylvania, saying that "if the same thing be done in some other of the states it will place the whole band more on their guard."

The task was too great, and after four years of effort he confessed his failure.

"I have lent myself willingly as the subject of a great experiment, which was to prove that an administration, conducting itself with integrity and common understanding, cannot be battered down, even by the falsehoods of a licentious press, and consequently still less by the press, as restrained within the legal and wholesome limits of truth. This experiment was wanting for the world to demonstrate the

falsehood of the pretext that freedom of the press is incompatible with orderly government. . . . But the fact being once established, that the press is impotent when it abandons itself to falsehood, I leave to others to restore it to its strength, by recalling it within the pale of truth. Within that it is a noble institution, equally the friend of science and of civil liberty."

In retirement Jefferson occupied the happy position of a seer, looked up to by his followers, consulted by the ambitious and the loyal, respected by friends for his high qualities, and no longer feared by his enemies, to whom he had become harmless. A seer possesses an enviable prerogative: he is privileged to talk or write much drivel, with a modicum of sense as a flavor. Jefferson had reached the highest honors attainable in a democracy, and was already looked upon as a guide, a political philosopher. Few appreciated the extent to which he had changed his policy, setting aside the very beliefs on which his opposition to federalist theory and practice was founded, and adopting bag and baggage the measures of his quondam opponents. To the many the Jefferson at Monticello was the same who created and molded into shape the successful republican policy of 1801, and the possibility of radical change had not entered into their calculations. The leader of a great moral cause must and can be entirely consistent, a Garrison fighting for abolition, for example. But we offer a different standard for a party leader or a constructive statesman. To them the path to success is lined with compromises, and we too often applaud the successful issue, forgetting the tortuous methods, the sacrifice of conscience and of better self involved in the process. Jefferson's contemporaries could know little of what he had undergone during his struggle for power, and during the years of rebuff and

partial failure while president. They sought his countenance, his advice and his prophecy—and rightly accepted his utterances as weighted by experience, refined by suffering, and sweetened by mellow age and ripe judgment.

But his connection with the press: he had never written for the newspapers, he had never established a journal, he had never been a great reader of the sheets, and he had almost ceased to receive them within his gates. He had been the encourager of the libellous Freneau, the rank Callender, and noisome Lyon, a supporter of the abler Duane, and an intimate of the really excellent Cooper. In extending a hand to Callender he had committed a grievous error, nor was he really happier in his relation with the self-seeking Duane. He had seen the other scribblers retire or climb into positions of trust and respectability. On the whole his relations with journalism had been unfortunate, and so he was admirably fitted to fill the chair of professor in a school of journalism. To an inquirer he gives his views on the subject, and it is interesting as the summation of his experience, if not very enlightening on the main question.

"To your request of my opinion of the manner in which a newspaper should be conducted, so as to be most useful, I should answer, 'by restraining it to true facts and sound principles only.' Yet I fear such a paper would find few subscribers. It is a melancholy truth, that a suppression of the press could not more completely deprive the nation of its benefits, than is done by its abandoned prostitution to falsehood. Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper. Truth itself becomes suspicious by being put into that polluted vehicle. The real extent of this state of misinformation is known only to those who are in situations to confront facts within their knowledge with the lies of the

day. I really look with commiseration over the great body of my fellow citizens, who, reading newspapers, live and die in the belief, that they have known something of what has been passing in the world in their time; whereas the accounts they have read in newspapers are just as true a history of any other period of the world as of the present, except that the real names of the day are affixed to their fables. . . . I will add, that the man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than he who reads them; inasmuch as he who knows nothing is nearer to truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods and errors. He who reads nothing will still learn the great facts, and the details are all false.

"Perhaps an editor might begin a reformation in some such way as this. Divide his paper into 4 chapters, heading the 1st, Truths, 2d, Probabilities, 3d, Possibilities, and 4th Lies. The first chapter would be very short, as it would contain little more than authentic papers, and information from such sources, as the editor would be willing to risk his own reputation for their truth. The 2d would contain what, from a mature consideration of all circumstances, his judgment should conclude to be probably true. This, however, should rather contain too little than too much. The 3d and 4th should be professedly for those who would rather have lies for their money than the blank paper they would occupy.

"Such an editor, too, would have to set his face against the demoralizing practise of feeding the public mind habitually on slander, and the depravity of taste which this nauseous aliment induces. Defamation is becoming a necessary of life; insomuch, that a dish of tea in the morning or evening cannot be digested without this stimulant. Even those who do not believe these abominations, still read them with complaisance to their auditors, and instead of the abhorrence and indignation which should fill a virtuous mind, betray a secret pleasure in the possibility that some may believe them, though they do not themselves. It seems to escape them, that it is not he who prints, but he who pays for printing a slander, who is its real author."

Seven years later his views of the press were unchanged, his expressions even more intense.

"I deplore, with you, the putrid state into which our newspapers have passed, and the malignity, the vulgarity, and mendacious spirit of those who write for them. . . . These ordures are rapidly depraving the public taste, and lessening its relish for sound food. As vehicles of information, and a curb on our functionaries, they have rendered themselves useless, by forfeiting all title to belief."

He thought the violence and malignancy of party spirit one of the great causes.

One paper sufficed for his needs, and in that he confessed he chiefly read the advertisements, "for they contain the only truths to be relied on in a newspaper." And thus we may take our leave of Jefferson in connection with the journals of his day. He had befriended and encouraged the worst types of writers, and shown little attention to the best; he had lashed himself into a fine frenzy over the temporary sedition laws as a gag upon free speech and an attack upon a free press, yet would have the states permanently apply the same remedy; he had wished to reform journalism, but his idea of reformation was that of the character in Beaconsfield's novel of the agreeable man—"one who agrees with me"; and he had begun by wishing for a sheet of intelligence without advertisements, ending by using a sheet of advertisements without news. It would be too much to say that these changes appertained also to his political career, yet it is recognized that his career was a campaign of education for himself quite as much as for the people. Nor should his connection with Freneau, Duane and Callender lead us to forget his sympathies and friendships for such high-minded men as Gallatin, Condorcet and Dupont de Nemours.

Since the above paper was written Mr. J. Henley Smith, a grandson of Samuel Harrison Smith, has shown me an entry in the manuscript "Reminiscences" of Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith, indicating that Jefferson was responsible for Mr. Smith's removal from Philadelphia to Washington, to establish the long and well-known *National Intelligencer*. This entry is as follows:

"During part of the time that Mr. Jefferson was President of the Philosophical Society (in Philadelphia), Mr. Smith was the Secretary. A prize offered by the Society for the best system of national education was gained by Mr. Smith. The merit of this essay first attracted the notice of Mr. J. to its author; the personal acquaintance which then took place, led to a friendly intercourse which influenced the future destiny of my husband, as it was by Mr. Jefferson's advice that he removed to Washington and established the *National Intelligencer*. Esteem for the talents and character of the editor first won Mr. Jefferson's regard—a regard which lasted to the end of his life and was a thousand times evinced by acts of personal kindness and confidence."

It is a pleasure to note this encouragement of an able and upright journalist by Jefferson. I was led to overlook the matter by the absence of anything in the Jefferson papers bearing upon it.